Economic, Science, Technological and Cultural Cooperation, a series of agreements between the two countries have been signed and number of mechanisms have been set up to promote trade and economic cooperation. Steps have also been taken to enlarge Indo-Russian trade on consignment export basis through the ware-houses and also ensuring greater presence of Indian banks in Russia. Both sides are also making efforts to promote bilateral trade through participation in trade fairs and exhibitions, exchange of trade information, etc.

Production of Large Cardamoms

2146. SHRI BHIM PRASAD DAHAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Spices Board and the Department of Biotechnology are going ahead with their tissue culture programme for large cardamom;

(b) if so, the details of financial outlay thereof, separately;

(c) whether these Boards proposes to go ahead to multiply field tests, high yielding material and identifying genetically superior quality of large cardamom; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. The project titled 'Large Cardamom Tissue Culture - Product Plan' is being implemented at a total cost of Rs. 58.05 lakhs to be shared between Department of Bio-technology and Spices Board. The project envisages large scale evaluation of the performance of Large Cardamom Tissue Culture vis-a-vis., its seedling population in planters field in four districts of Sikkim and Distt: Darjeeling, West Bengal.

(c) and (d). The first 'Programme Monitoring and Management Committee' (PMMC) meeting on tissue culture large cardamom product plan has identified eight clones namely SBLC-5, SBLC-7, SBLC-9, SBLC-10, SBLC-33, SBLC-37, SBLC-42 and SBLC-43 for invitro multiplication. The selection of the clones are based on a field level survey. The survey is intended to identify elite clones. The survey covered North, South, West and East Sikkim and Darjeeling District of West Bengal. The bench mark set up for selection of the elite clones is yield of 1000 kgs. per hectare, against the average national productivity of 225 kgs. per hectare (1995-96). The survey was undertaken by Indian Cardamom Research Institute of the Spices Board, Gangtok.

Captive Coal Mining Blocks

2147. SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received a number of proposals for allotment of captive Coal mining blocks from companies, engaged in power generating and manufacture of Steel and Iron;

(b) if so, the number of such proposals pending for clearance with CIL alongwith the reasons for delay in giving clearance to those proposals; and

(c) the steps taken to take decision on such proposals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) and (c). The Screening Committee, constituted in the Ministry of Coal have considered a number of proposals for identification of captive coal blocks for allotment to power generating companies and companies engaged in the manufacture of Iron Steel.

Based on the decision of Screening Committee 15 power generating companies and 5 Iron and steel companies have been offered captive coal blocks.

Apart from this, proposals have been received from 10 power generating companies, 2 Iron and steel companies and 5 cement companies, which are under examination in consultation with CIL and concerned Ministries of the Government.

Financial Position of STC

2148. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the State Trading Corporation of India (STC) had fudged its 1995-96 accounts to convert a loss of Rs. 51.36 crore into a profit of Rs. 32.67 crore, as reported in 'The Financial Express', New Delhi dated October 1,1996;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Comptroller and Auditor-General has also made several scathing remarks on the accounting practice of STC; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b). State Trading Corpn. of India has intimated that it finalised its accounts for the financial year 1995-96 on the basis of its well established accounting policies. The accounts were audited by the statutory auditors appointed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the same were considered and approved by the Board of Directors of STC. These audited accounts of STC reflected a profit of Rs. 32.67 crores. However, C & AG subsequently in its comments observed that the provision should be made for the following amounts :

(i) Rs. 20.02 crores to be realised on account of canalised import of newsprint in the period prior and upto 1991-92.